

Message Text

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47

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /065 W

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R 051400Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6021

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

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LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT KE

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED CANDIDATE ELECTED DEPUTY
SPEAKER

1. JAMES MUREGI NARROWLY WAS ELECTED DEPUTY SPEAKER OF KENYAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY NOV 4 FILLING POST MADE VACANT ON OCTOBER 15 WHEN FORMER DEPUTY SPEAKER JOHN SERONEY WAS PLACED UNDER DETENTION (NAIROBI 9069). MUREGI, A KIKUYU, WAS THE ESTABLISHMENT CANDIDATE. HE HAD SERVED AS ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER SINCE SERONEY'S DETENTION AND ENJOYED FULL BACKING OF GOK. HIS OPPONENT, CHARLES MURGOR, A WIDELY-RESPECTED FORMER PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER FROM WESTERN KENYA, HAS BEEN A FREQUENT CRITIC OF GOVERNMENT IN PAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

2. BATTLE LINES WERE THUS CLEARLY DRAWN BETWEEN MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS OF GOK AND MASS OF DISPARATE, UNORGANIZED BACKBENCHERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY CHAFING UNDER
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RECENT GOVERNMENT MOVES TO STIFLE PARLIAMENTARY DISSENT.

AS SPECIFIED IN ASSEMBLY'S RULES, VOTING WAS BY SECRET BALLOT WHICH PROVIDED RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR BACKBENCHERS TO TAKE A STAND WITHOUT FEAR OF INTIMIDATION OR POSSIBLE REPRISAL. AFTER TWO BALLOTS REQUIRING TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY FAILED TO PRODUCE A WINNER, MUREGI WAS ELECTED 72-62 ON THIRD BALLOT AMID WILD CHEERS BY FRONT BENCHERS AND NOMINATED MEMBERS WHO WERE PRESENT IN FORCE FOR KEY VOTE.

3. LOCAL PRESS SOURCE WHO CLAIMS TO KNOW MUREGI WELL TOLD EMBOFF NEW DEPUTY SPEAKER IS "NONENTITY" WHO CAN BE COUNTED ON TO DO GOVERNMENT'S BIDDING. PARLIAMENT-WATCHERS MAY HAVE TO WAIT TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON MUREGI AS ASSEMBLY EXPECTED SHORTLY TO GO INTO LONG ADJOURNMENT, PERHAPS AS EARLY AS NOV 7.

4. COMMENT: ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER BY SECRET BALLOT PROVIDED ACCURATE READING OF RELATIVE VOTING STRENGTH OF PRO-GOK AND BACKBENCH FACTIONS AND DEMONSTRATES HEALTHY NON-CONFORMITY WITHIN CONTEXT OF ONE-PARTY SYSTEM.
MARSHALL

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